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BY

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Welsh National Melodies and Folk-Song.[1]

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The great and increasing interest shown by various western nations in their native melodies, and the wonderful success that has attended the efforts of English collectors of Folk-songs, suggests that it is time that we Welsh people should set about the serious study of our National Melodies, and the collection of such of our Folk-songs as are still unpublished. The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion has done a great deal, particularly during the earlier years of its existence, to foster a love of our native minstrelsy. More recently, valuable papers on the subject have been read before the Society by some of our foremost musicians. There are two names in particular that deserve recognition for the work they

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have done in elucidating the history of Welsh music, and in publishing charming musical arrangements of a large number of the airs; they are those of the veteran harpist, Mr. John Thomas *(Pencerdd Gwalia)*, and of Mr. D. Emlyn Evans. In addition to other work in this field, the latter contributed to the *Cerddor* for 1893 a most valuable list of Welsh airs published up to that date. It is greatly to be regretted that the state of his health prevents Mr. Evans from completing the work so well begun by him, for he undoubtedly knows more about the subject than any other Welsh musician.

In spite of all that has been done for the study of Welsh national melody, the subject still remains in a state of sad confusion. To begin with, it is well known that many of the airs in the earlier collections are of non-Welsh origin, and there are many others which, owing to their English titles, or to the possession of certain characteristics more frequently found in English or Irish airs, lie under a strong suspicion of not being native.

This is not the place to dwell upon the value of a nation's minstrelsy. It is self-evident that the benefit to be derived by any people from the singing of its national music can only be obtained from such of the melodies as show the possession of national characteristics. Some of these songs have grown up with the people and with the language; others have been composed by men who were steeped in the traditions of their country, and filled with love of its history and its literature; these are the melodies which are recognised by the hearts of the people, as expressing the national aspirations; and it is these songs, and these only, that can be relied upon in school, or college, or Eisteddfod, to foster a love of language and of country. Furthermore, it is only by an intimate acquaintance with such truly national song that our musicians can ever hope

to establish a distinctively Welsh school of musical composition.

But what are these characteristics? Though the lover of Welsh minstrelsy frequently feels, as by a kind of intuition, when a melody is truly national, no one has been able as yet to formulate any rules for the identification of these distinctive traits. It is true that a great many people, particularly our English neighbours, regard the prevalence of the minor mode as one of the characteristics, but this has never been statistically demonstrated; many musicians hold that mournful tunes are not more numerous in Wales than in other parts of the British Isles, and it is well known that a great many of the best old English airs are in the minor mode. That Welsh melodies have a distinctive character of their own cannot be denied. Whether these are too subtle to be analysed and stated in words after a careful and critical comparative study remains to be seen.

In addition to the foreign airs which require to be weeded out of our list of native melodies, we find in most of the old collections a number of purely instrumental pieces which deserve no place whatever in our *repertoire* of Welsh airs. It is perfectly true that a great many of our best airs were originally harp tunes, and had no words fitted to them till a comparatively late period; there are, however, many melodies which, owing to their extended compass, or to their melodic structure, are quite unvocal. It is clear that all such tunes should be eliminated, unless indeed the forms of some of them permit of their being used for penillion singing.

Lastly, a number of airs have been included which, though of Welsh origin, are either inferior musically, or, owing to the absence of the Welsh feeling, have never appealed to the Welsh singer, and, consequently, lack the

element of persistence that should characterise a national melody.

Far more deplorable than this state of confusion in our list of melodies is the indifference that has been exhibited towards our national airs during the last twenty years. They have been neglected to such an extent that they have all but disappeared from concert programmes; the Challenge Solo Competition has nearly banished them from the local Eisteddfod platform, and, as a natural result, although the country is now richer in vocal talent than it ever was, few of our vocalists understand how to sing the melodies properly. They apply to these simple airs the methods of the opera, and then attribute the ill success of the renderings to the poorness of the airs, rather than to their own faulty interpretation. And yet when the melodies are sung in a simple, unaffected manner, by singers that possess a loving insight into their genius, they never fail to reach the hearts of the people that listen to them. There are, however, welcome signs that the tide has turned and is beginning again to set in their favour. This, then, is a particularly opportune moment for placing the study of this department of our national heritage on a thoroughly sound scientific basis.

The present paper is intended merely as an introduction to the more detailed and critical work which remains to be done, and as a general survey of the field. For the student the most crying need of the present is a detailed bibliography. A complete list of all the Welsh airs already published is in preparation, including full references to the collections where they may be found, and to old ballads and lyrics in connection with which their names have appeared. It is hoped that such a list will facilitate the work of the student, and that in time it will be found possible to formulate rules and guiding principles for

the recognition of the distinguishing traits of Welsh minstrelsy.

It is clear that no satisfactory work can be done in this subject by any investigator unless he has some acquaintance with the song literature of other nationalities, particularly the English and Irish. It is equally evident that the work to be done requires the co-operation of many students. A careful examination of all the available historical data, together with a critical study of the internal evidence of the melodies themselves, their tonality, form, and melodic structure, ought to enable us to decide with greater certainty whether any given melodies are of Welsh or of foreign origin. One important result of such an inquiry would be the formation of a standard list of *bonâ fide* Welsh melodies. This would involve the rejection of a number of tunes which are foreign in both their origin and character. There are, however, many tunes of undoubted foreign origin which have settled in our country, and, in the process, have taken on certain Welsh peculiarities of rhythm and melody, so that they are now indistinguishable from the true product of the soil. Quite recently a Welsh musician condemned a number of tunes, and said they could not compare with certain fine old Welsh tunes which he specified. Out of the five melodies named by him, four were immigrants from over the border, and yet he was not inexcusably wrong, for each of the tunes had taken on a distinctively Welsh garb. Other *rejectamenta* would be some of the purely instrumental pieces already referred to—melodies which had only a transient vogue, and, being devoid of any national characteristics, were, from their very nature, incapable of expressing any national sentiment. The remaining songs would include all the really native melodies, together with local forms of a number of

tunes, which, like certain folk-tales and ballads, are widely distributed over the British Isles and other countries, and whose home cannot be specified.

The list so compiled would necessarily be much shorter than our present one, but it would be of far greater value to the musician and to the student of musical history.

The activity of the newly-formed Welsh Folk-Song Society is likely to add to the list a large number of hitherto unpublished airs, of which many will undoubtedly be of permanent value. Here, again, the operation of separating the wheat from the chaff will sometimes prove to be one of great difficulty. Even after winnowing out the non-Welsh constituents, there will be the further task of eliminating the worthless airs. It seems as if certain folk-song enthusiasts were disposed to regard every melody whose authorship cannot be traced as of "communal origin", and as something sacred and above criticism. This were as absurd as it would be to regard all folk-rhymes and ballads as heaven-born poetry. And yet we know that musicians have over and over again rejected as worthless, melodies which others, equally great or greater, have regarded as inspired.

Some of our Welsh musicians have expressed a great deal of scepticism about the possibility of finding any melodies not already collected, and, when face to face with the fact that a large number have already been discovered, they boldly say that the new finds cannot equal the old tunes. We can imagine the same words of discouragement being addressed to Maria Jane Williams, of Aberpergwm, while she was noting down from the lips of the South Wales peasantry such expressive melodies as "Y Fwyalchen" and "Y Deryn Pur".

Hitherto the melodies have been considered from one point of view only, the purely musical one. It must not

be forgotten that they may furnish a great deal of very valuable information to the student of ethnology—local dialects are now closely studied ; everything in the form of folk-lore is carefully collected—national melody, and folk-song in particular, would be of the very greatest interest in the study of races and their characteristics. To give one instance, there can be no doubt that there is a great difference between the melodies of North Wales and those of the Southern part of the Principality. In the former harp music prevailed, and penillion singing was cultivated by all who could sing at all, whereas in South Wales the song, in the ordinary sense of the word, predominated. In North Wales, owing perhaps to the prevalence of the harp, the tonality of the melodies seemed strikingly modern, and of the modal tunes that occurred the majority were Dorian. In South Wales, on the other hand, modal tunes were far more common, and many of them were in other modes than the Dorian, or exhibited mixed, often eccentric, tonality. These are but a few of the differences observable, but they are easily explicable on ethnological grounds ; the greater admixture of Norman, Flemish, and, in later times, of many other nationalities, with the Celtic blood in South Wales would, in itself, suffice to account for the character of its folk-music.

It is extremely unfortunate that we have no published collections of Welsh melodies of earlier date than 1742. This makes it impossible to trace the development of national melody, and increases the difficulty of deciding the conflicting claims of English and Welsh to certain tunes. The only sources of information at our disposal are certain well-known, because often quoted, passages from the old Welsh laws, from Giraldus, and from the annals of old Eisteddfodau, together with incidental

references in the works of Dafydd ap Gwilym and other poets, and, finally, a fairly long list of names of tunes.

One can hardly hope for the unearthing of any musical MSS. of the pre-1742 period, but something may still be done to extend and to clarify our ideas of the music of that time and of the status of the harpists and singers. The old belief respecting the hoary antiquity of most of the Welsh melodies has disappeared : the great Druidic myth so sedulously cultivated by the collectors of the eighteenth century has been exploded. And yet so tenacious of life was it that we find in the Carnarvon Eisteddfod (1894) prize essay the statement that "many of the airs found in our collections at the present day have *undoubtedly* descended to us from the ancient Druids". With regard to the passage from Giraldus, referred to above, it is very probable that more has been read into it than a correct translation warrants. It certainly testifies to a high development of musical taste and capacity, but the passage relating to part-singing is not very clear, and in other parts of the book the singing of the Irish and of the North countrymen is described in very eulogistic terms. Progress in the future will not be assisted by a too complacent magnification of the supposed glories of the past.

The activity shown in research by our young Welsh scholars will probably bring to the light of day many illuminating references to musical matters, and in official records there may be hitherto unnoticed information about Welsh musicians. During the Tudor period it is well known that Welsh harpists were numerous, not only in Wales, but in England as well, and that many Welshmen, with poetical and musical tastes, filled important posts in England. In 1530 there was published a book of songs among which was one composed by Sion Gwynedd, and entitled "My Love Mourneth". A few years later a

Richard Jones published, in London, "A Handfull of Pleasant Delites". That this printer was a Welshman is confirmed by the motto of the book, "Heb Dduw, heb ddim." There are probably many other interesting cases.

From a purely musical point of view, the period that would best repay study would be that from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, particularly the latter half of it. If all the references occurring in the literature of the period, together with information gleaned from official documents, were collected together and carefully collated by some musician who also possesses a knowledge of the life of the period and of contemporary English music, and of the Welsh poetry and metres of the time, the work would be of the utmost value as a contribution to our knowledge of the musical activity of that particular period on the one hand, and, on the other, as a foundation to the critical study of the airs that we still possess.

The interesting facts about the enterprise of Welshmen during the Tudor period, and the positions of trust that many of them had gained outside Wales, together with the close intercourse between the English and the Welsh during that time, and during the campaign of the Civil War, are made use of in two contrary ways. Some writers will have it that, as a result of this intercourse, our melodies were to a great extent replaced by English airs. There must be a great deal of truth in this, but the other side of the question should not be ignored. Is it not highly probable that our harpists, our soldiers, our singers, set some of the Welsh melodies a-travelling then? We know that extensive travel, and close intercourse with foreigners, did not prevent certain Welshmen of that age from cherishing their language and adding to its literature. Why, then, should it so readily be taken for granted that they discarded their native melodies?

Chappell and other English writers have claimed many of the tunes in our collections as English, on the ground of priority of publication in England. That this in itself is insufficient evidence is proved by the well-known cases of "Y Gadlys", and "Clychau Aberdyfi", both of which had been utilised in English ballad operas long before they appeared in any Welsh collection. In both these cases the Welsh origin is acknowledged in the Welsh references that occur in the English words. The case of "The Bells of Aberdovey" is particularly instructive, for though it had been sung in a ballad opera in London in 1785, it was not published in Wales till Maria Jane Williams noted it in her collection of folk-songs in the year 1844. One additional example, of much later date, may be given. In Vol. I, Part 3, of *The Folk-song Journal* may be seen a melody noted in Sussex, the words commencing "There were six joyful Welshmen". It is evidently a degenerate version of "St. David's Day", so much altered in rhythm that it was found impossible to identify the original barring of the tune.

Another matter that requires the attention of the musical student is the critical analysis of the curious instructions for playing the *crwth*, and the solution of the notation in which are locked up the tunes, or, more probably, *crwth* accompaniments, to be found in the *Myvyrian Archaiology*, and dating from the reign of Charles I, or, perhaps, much earlier.

There is a very long list of names of melodies sung during this period, and the study of them gives much food for thought. The earlier names are almost wholly Welsh, but of the later ones, particularly those associated with the *Cerddi* of the latter half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, a very high percentage, often more than fifty per cent., bear English names. Of the earlier

ones the great majority are quite unfamiliar. A few, such as "Mwynen Gwynedd", "Erddigan Hun Gwenllian", and "Caniad Pibau Morfudd", have survived; it does not follow, however, that the melodies are the same. Even now we have plenty of cases where several different tunes bear the same name. The very first air in the 1742 Collection is called "Sidannen". In the *Blodeugerdd* is a ballad in praise of Sidannen (Queen Elizabeth), and written to a tune of the same name. It would have been utterly impossible to fit the ballad to John Parry's "Sidannen", so there must have been another air bearing the same name but in a different metre.

There is another fact that should be taken into consideration. Although the oldest of our collections are only from a hundred to a hundred-and-fifty years old, many of the tunes have in that interval altered considerably. This is inevitable in the case of the best melodies—those that are sung by generation after generation. Like the language itself the songs are in a state of flux. "Morfa Rhuddlan" is very different now from the version recorded by Blind Parry, and "Nos Galan", whose tonality seems now so strikingly modern, was once sung with the flat 7th. It follows that even should we be able to prove that the airs mentioned above have persisted, they must have undergone a great many changes during that time. Looked at from this point of view, the attempts of certain writers to ascertain the age of the melodies by an examination of their present structure must be viewed with suspicion.

Of the songs which are quoted as in use for ballad singing during the period from 1650 to the beginning of the last century, we still possess a large number, but, as has already been pointed out, among them there is a very large proportion of tunes bearing English names. It must not be concluded, however, that all these were necessarily

English. A name frequently found above the old ballads is "Crimson Velvet", or "Ffion Felfed". There were several old tunes called by this name, but they are all different from the English one quoted by Chappell, not only in melody but in metre as well. What probably happened was this: an English ballad was written on the old story of the crimson velvet; the idea was borrowed by a Welsh ballad writer, but he wrote in a different metre. If the ballad became popular, then we know from analogous processes going on, even to-day, that it would be sung to different tunes in different localities, unless indeed the tune itself was sufficiently striking to become popular. The name of the ballad now attached itself to the tunes, and the next step was to utilise the airs themselves for the singing of other ballads in the same metre, but on different subjects.

In other cases the name was generic. Among the English there were many tunes which were sung at the close of convivial gatherings; they were all entitled "Loath to Depart". We also find more than one "Anhawdd Ymadael" in our Welsh list, but I have not been able to find as yet that any of them are English, though they may bear the English title.

Lastly, many of the itinerant ballad-mongers were ignorant and ill-educated, and they often imposed upon the peasantry by affecting a knowledge of English which they really did not possess. Thus, some of the Welsh ballads have English versions which are evidently clumsy translations from the Welsh. Similarly, some of the Welsh titles were clumsily translated; occasionally the needlessness of the translation was obvious, as in the case of "The Anglesey Tune".

But even after making due deductions for the cases mentioned above, the fact remains that a large number of

these ballad tunes were non-Welsh. This is not to be wondered at, for even to-day we are quite as guilty of despising our own treasures. Had the ballad singers enriched our store of ballad tunes by borrowing of the very best, they might have been forgiven; as a matter of fact, however, many of the tunes are very poor. It is an undoubted fact that ballad music was far less Welsh than harp music, and that it was inferior in quality to both the harp melodies of the cultured classes on the one hand, and the folk-song of the peasantry on the other.

We have referred to three different classes of tunes, the *Harp Melodies*, the *Ballad Tunes*, and the *Folk-songs*. Before passing in review the published collections of Welsh airs it would be convenient to explain the distinctions drawn between the three kinds of tunes.

Harp melodies are easily distinguished by their chordal structure, by the prevalence of arpeggios and extended scale passages, and by the frequency of sequential melodic figures. Added to these are the modern tonality and the boldness of most of the airs. All these traits are due to the qualities of the instrument itself. Owing to the fact that the triple harp had the semitones, in addition to the complete diatonic scale, many of the melodies modulate into nearly related keys. The majority were originally purely instrumental; this explains the fact that many airs that are perfect in form and melodic structure are *as yet* devoid of the intimate association of word and note which one finds in those airs that have grown up *with*, or *out of*, the words. Another Ceiriog may come who may succeed in unlocking the door to the heart of many more of the fine old tunes. In North Wales, where harp playing was very highly developed, the chief vocal use of the melodies was for penillion singing. This art was peculiar to North Wales, the South Walians excelling in the ordinary song.

Most of the typical *ballad tunes* came into existence without the intervention of a musical instrument—they were entirely vocal. They sprang out of attempts to give expression to the story of the ballad. In a great many cases they were devoid of both melodic and rhythmic beauty. Many of the ballad metres had exceedingly long verses, and a great number of them; the singers in many cases were uneducated men who wrote very inferior verse; most of them do not seem to have been moved to sing by any musical feeling, their only inspiration having been the desire to earn an honest penny. A very large number of these tunes are plaintive in character, a fact that is pointed out by Chappell in relation to old English narrative tunes also. They are simple in structure, the only leaps occurring in the melody in many cases being to the 5th or 8th or some other strongly accented note at the commencement of a phrase, the remaining notes moving in stepwise succession. Most of the tunes, having to be sung to a large number of long verses and to many ballads of diverse natures, are utterly devoid of any strongly marked sentiment. Even in the case of the better class ballads of Huw Morus and others, one feels that far too much is expected of the tune. Take, for instance, one of the "Carolau Mai". Here we have a short musical metre, and there are many charming lines in the verses, and at least two of the tunes (*Mwynen Mai*) to which they can be sung are very pretty; yet, owing to the continual change of sentiment in the words, and also to the frequency of words that are only of use in bringing in alliteration, we are prevented from feeling any distinct intimacy between words and music. As the ballad singers were more intent upon their story than the music, the latter became a mere sing-song, often suggestive of the "Hwyl" of old Welsh preachers.

The *Folk-song* proper was generally much superior to the ballad tune as music. It originated in a desire to sing, either for singing's sake, or in order to express emotion, or to give better expression to certain lyrics that had taken the fancy of the singer. Some of the oldest are characterised by bold rhythm and striking melody, but the words are mere jingle, without any attempt at either metre, rhyme, or poetry. Such are various cumulative songs, "Can Rhannu", and the many versions of "Yr Hen Wr Mwyn", with its startling contrast in pace and spirit between the question and the answer, and many others.

As examples of the lyrical ones we need only mention such gems as "Y Fwyalchen", "Y Deryn pur", "Tra bo Dau", "Y Gwcw Fach", "Merch y Melinydd", and others. Here we have homely words, few verses, a clear idea clearly expressed, in terms which call up a picture, or appeal to the heart. Though the language is often colloquial, it is direct, and does not err by being too abstract, or unusual, or unnecessary, as frequently do more ambitious lyrics. These words are wedded to equally simple spontaneous melodies and we feel that it would be a sin to divorce them.

While the three classes of melody are thus typically distinct, as might be expected, the three divisions are joined by intermediates. A few of the harp airs, such as "Morfa Rhuddlan", and others, were occasionally utilised as ballad tunes; many of the folk melodies were as strikingly chordal in their structure as any of the harp melodies, while others were as purely vocal as were many of the ballad tunes. In both these classes modal tunes and melodies which are devoid of decided rhythmic feeling are frequent. Penillion singing often partook of the characteristics of folk-song. The mode of singing penillion in alternate solo and chorus, as in "Nos Galan", "Hob

y Deri", and the various "Tribannau", a style widely prevalent in both North and South Wales, might also be regarded as combining the characters of harp melody and folk-music.

It is true that much of the singing took place in public-houses, and this naturally gave rise to much trashy music and unprintable words. This did not prevent the production and appreciation of some of the most beautiful of our folk-melodies. The same paradox exists to-day, where some of the most inspired of our sacred melodies are sung in various inappropriate places.

The first collection of Welsh melodies published was called *Antient British Music.*[1] It appeared in 1742, and consisted of twenty-four melodies, arranged by John Parry, the Blind Harpist of Ruabon, and Evan Williams, or Ifan William, a London musician. The volume is not very valuable. Many of the pieces are so artificial and laboured that they do not deserve a place in any collection of national melodies. Others bear names which at once suggest a foreign origin, *e.g.*: "Mael Syms" (Moll Sims), "Gramwndws Gallia", and "Burstoy". Among them, however, we find such undoubtedly native tunes as "Morfa Rhuddlan", "Meillionen", and "Breuddwyd Dafydd Rhys". It seems as if Parry, in his first essay, committed the mistake of ignoring the simple and natural, and straining after the elaborate and difficult. This is confirmed by the fact that many of the tunes found no place in the *repertoire*

[1] Mr. Frank Kidson has very kindly informed me that he has in his possession the only known copy of a volume called *Aria di Camera*, date, 1727 or 1728, containing the following Welsh airs:—"Welch Richard", "Welch Morgan", "Meillionen o Feirionydd", "Morva Ryddlan", and "North Welch Morris". These were contributed by Hugh Edwards of Carmarthen. Mr. Kidson adds: "I have also found, scattered through various publications, early Welsh tunes, prior to 1742."

of succeeding harpists. Bardd Alaw, writing in the *Cambro-Briton*, in 1820, tells us that he did not know the name of the compiler of the imperfect copy that he possessed, and that many of the airs it contained were unfamiliar to him. The names of the tunes were not printed, but in many of the copies still extant they have been written. Incidentally, it may be of interest to observe that the arrangements are quite different from those that appeared in the later volumes of John Parry, or in the works of Edward Jones. They are more ingenious, and show a fondness for imitative and anticipatory figures. May we not reasonably conclude that they are the work of Ifan William rather than of John Parry?

John Parry's second volume is generally believed to have appeared in 1761. Hamer Jones, in his unpublished Bibliography (which Mr. Vincent Evans kindly allowed me to examine), gives the date as 1752. It was entitled: *A Collection of Welsh, English, and Scotch Airs*, etc. Of these the titles are given: only four are Welsh, the only new one being "Y Gadlys", here called "Of noble race was Shenkin". This had long been a favourite in England. In addition to these there are, however, twelve unnamed "airs for the Guittar", and it does not appear to have been noticed that most of these are Welsh, among them being "Mwynder Arglwyddes Owain", "Cwympiad y Dail", "Glan Fedd-dod Mwyn", and "Blodau'r Drain". Of the three volumes published by Blind Parry, the *British Harmony*, published in 1781, was by far the most valuable. Of the forty-two airs contained in it, the majority were typical Welsh melodies, many of which have retained their popularity to the present time, as, for example, "Syr Harri Ddu", "Nos Galan", "Mynachdy", "Blodau'r Gorllewin", "Hûd y Frwynen", "Merch Megan", "Mentra Gwen", etc. There are, however, several that are undoubtedly English,

or whose claims to be regarded as Welsh are very doubtful.

In 1784, Edward Jones, of Llandderfel, otherwise known as *Bardd y Brenin*, published the first edition of his *Relicks of the Welsh Bards.* This contains sixty airs, and in the title page it is claimed that they had never before been published. Edward Jones was an extraordinarily diligent collector of melodies, but he was exceedingly uncritical. This is shown in the list of melodies contained in his book. The first, "Rhyban Morfudd", was a new publication, but the three succeeding ones had already appeared in John Parry's last volume, published three years before. Out of the total of sixty, more than one-third had already appeared. His want of care is also shown by the fact that he has in more than one instance published the same tune twice, under two different names, as in the case of "Ffarwel Ednyfed Fychan", which appears on another page as "Castell Towyn".

In this volume we meet with "Ar hyd y nos", "Wyres Ned Puw", "Dafydd y Garreg Wen", "Codiad yr hedydd", "Tros-y-Garreg", "Pen Rhaw", and other well-known melodies.

A second edition appeared in 1791, but some copies bear other dates, such as 1794, 1796, and 1800. This volume contained forty-two melodies additional to those in the first edition, and all except four were new publications. Among them were "Gorhoffedd Gwyr Harlech", "Gogerddan", Codiad yr Haul," and "Dewch i'r Frwydyr".

In the year 1802 there appeared *The Bardic Museum*, the second volume of the *Relicks*, containing sixty melodies, of which forty-nine were new. Here first appeared "Agoriad y Cywair", "Pant Corlan yr Wyn", and "Y Bardd yn ei Awen".

When we survey the list of melodies published up to

the beginning of the nineteenth century there are some facts which strike us forcibly. In the first place *the airs were nearly all instrumental.* In the three volumes published by Blind Parry there are no lyrics. A very few do occur in the works of Edward Jones, but besides being so rare as to be practically negligible; they are all, except the few penillion, very poor and clumsily fitted to the airs. The volumes are collections of "songs without words".

It is true that English musicians had published some of these as songs with English words. We find, for instance, *Six Welch airs adapted to English words, and harmonized for three or four voices* (1796). The words were by Mrs. Opie, and the arrangements by E. S. Biggs. The fact, however, remains that we have in these collections no examples of Welsh *songs* of the period, excepting a few like "Nos Galan", "Hob y Deri", and "Yr Hen Wr o'r Coed". We know that there must have existed a large number of folk-songs. Their absence from these volumes is not difficult of explanation. The collectors were two harpists, one living in London, the other often accompanying his patron (Sir Watkin Williams Wynn) to England. They would probably not have much sympathy with the songs of the peasantry; even to-day many musicians look upon folk-music with contempt. The peasant singers in their turn felt shy of singing their simple ditties to these clever harpists. Collectors of to-day know only too well how difficult it is to unlock the memory of the folk-singer without abundance of tact and sympathy. Even if the collectors were acquainted with the folk-songs, they might perhaps think it foolish to print these trifles, these "common" songs, which everyone knew. Mr. J. H. Davies has pointed out that no one started printing traditional Welsh folk-ballads and lyrics until the last century, because they were so well known; in fact, they were so common that

they were thought nothing of. Formerly only newly-composed ballads were printed, as these were the only ones that would sell.

The other notable fact about these collectors is that both of them were Northwalians. If we exclude the five Welsh songs contributed to the *Aria di Camera* in 1727, by Hugh Edwards of Carmarthen, the very first South Wales contributions to our song literature was made, in 1844, by Miss Williams of Aberpergwm. As has already been pointed out, if the North excelled in harp music and penillion singing, South Wales was distinguished for its songs. When we study the beautiful melodies collected in a comparatively small district by Miss Williams and by Ieuan Ddu, we begin to realise the loss sustained by the country through the indifference of their predecessors. If collectors had been equally active a hundred years earlier, if they also had the artistic sense to appreciate all the different kinds of national melodies, and if the whole country had been ransacked, instead of certain limited areas, what a rich store of beautiful native minstrelsy would have been treasured up. If we are asked why so many of these have disappeared from among the peasantry, seeing that all really national music is characterized by persistence, the answer is clear. The rise of Nonconformity in Wales, and the waves of Revival that swept over the country during the closing years of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, produced two very contrary effects. On the one hand the movement gave the people a more serious view of life and banished a great many of the vices and frivolities that cankered the social life and condition of the people. At the same time, as in other reformations, in this and in other countries, a vast amount of temporary injury was caused to the artistic development of the country. Every-

thing that had been in any way connected with the sinful pleasures of the old life was ruthlessly cast aside: there was no attempt to discriminate between the good and the evil. Speedily the harp became rarer and more rare; penillion singing very nearly became a lost art; violins, 'cellos, and clarionets disappeared from the churches; for over sixty years there was a strong prejudice against allowing musical instruments of any kind to enter a place of worship; even yet, certain country places stand out against organs or harmoniums in their churches. The singing of the old worldly songs was regarded as sinful, and old people who still remembered the old ballads could not be persuaded to sing such "vain and trashy things"; young people rarely had a chance of hearing any of them, and they naturally grew up with the idea that Welsh airs were comparatively few in number and that still fewer of them were worth singing. In fact, the process was more than a forgetting of the old music: it was one of extinction of the songs; there was a deliberate attempt to destroy the taste for the melodies. When we consider the fact that the Welsh gentry had become Anglicized in their ideas, and that the Welsh middle class and peasantry had become so thoroughly imbued with the Puritanical feeling, it is a wonder that so much of the old music remains. We are thankful to the Methodist Revival for giving us so much excellent sacred music; at the same time we cannot avoid regretting the want of discrimination shown in dealing with our national minstrelsy, and lamenting the loss that resulted from it.

The place of Edward Jones among Welsh musicians is that of an extremely diligent collector of melodies. In *Wales*, vol. i, there is a copy of a letter written by Iolo Morganwg, about the year 1792, to a Mr. Moyle, in which Edward Jones is referred to in very depreciatory

terms. He is said to be incapable of writing three words of English correctly, and it is further stated that much of the literary portion of the *Relicks* was written by Mr. John Walters and Mr. Samwell, and some by Iolo himself, but, as the latter bitterly remarks, without a word of acknowledgment by Edward Jones. Mr. Emlyn Evans, in his note on this letter in the *Cerddor* (vol. v, p. 88), agrees that "the value of the literary work of Edward Jones was very small—he was too devoid of critical acumen, and too ready to load his pages with all kinds of traditions and superstitions; still he performed an excellent service to the Welsh nation, and his labours and fame will not soon be forgotten".

Although Edward Jones continued his activities till 1820, this, perhaps, is the best place to quote Chappell's remarks about the authenticity of certain of the airs contained in Jones' three volumes of Welsh melodies. In a footnote to the tune "Dargasson" (*Popular Music of the Olden Time*, p. 64), Chappell says: "This tune is inserted in Jones' *Relicks*, p. 129, under the name of 'The Melody of Cynwyd', and some other curious coincidences occur in the same work. At p. 176 the tune called 'The Welcome of the Hostess' is evidently our 'Mitter Rant'. At p. 176 the tune called 'Flaunting Two' is the country dance of the 'Hempdresser'. At p. 129 the 'Delight of the Men of Dovey' appears to be an inferior copy of 'Green Sleeves'. At p. 174 is 'Hunting the Hare', which we also claim. At p. 162 'The Monks' March' is 'General Monk's March', published by Playford, and the quick part 'The Rummer', and at p. 142 the air called 'White Locks' is evidently 'Commissioner Whitelocke's Coranto'. . . . In several of these, particularly in the last, which is identified by the second part of the tune (and especially by a very different version, under the same name, in Parry's

Cambrian Harmony . . . .), there is considerable variation, as may be expected in tunes traditionally preserved for so long a time, but their identity admits of little question. In vol. ii, at p. 25, 'The Willow Hymn' is 'By the osiers so dank'. At p. 44 'The first of August' is 'Come Jolly Bachus', with a little admixture of 'In my cottage near a wood'. At p. 33 a tune called 'The Britons', which is in *The Dancing Master* of 1696, is claimed. At p. 45 'Mopsy's Tune, the old way' is the 'Barking Barber', and 'Prestwich Bells' is 'Talk no more of Whig or Tory', contained in many collections. At vol. iii, p. 15, 'The Heiress of Montgomery' is another version of 'As down in the meadows'. At p. 16 'Captain Corbett' is 'Of all comforts I miscarried', and at p. 49 'If love's a sweet passion' is claimed. In addition to these Mr. Jones himself noticed a coincidence between the tune called 'The King's Note' (vol. iii) and 'Pastyme in Good Company'. Such mistakes will always occur when an editor relies solely on tradition."

Many of the above claims are undoubtedly well founded, while others require further investigation. Scattered through the volumes of *Y Cerddor Cymreig* may be found a number of other interesting parallels between Welsh and English melodies.

During his tours in Wales, in the closing years of the eighteenth century, Bingley devoted some attention to Welsh music. He has an interesting description of one of the last of the *crwths*, and some critical remarks upon harps and harpists, and Welsh minstrelsy, but he contributes very little that is new, excepting in the way of variants of melodies already published. Some of these he wrote down from the playing of harpists, and his claims to have secured better forms of the melodies than those of Edward Jones are very often justified. The fact remains, however, that

he confined his investigations entirely to harp music, and made no attempts to get acquainted with the national folk-melodies.

In 1807 there appeared Dr. Crotch's *Specimens of Various Styles of Music.* Among these were thirty-six Welsh airs. Most of them were selected from the work of Edward Jones, but a few were derived from other sources. With the exception of one tune all were harp melodies. The history of the solitary exception is somewhat interesting. Number 156 of the specimens has no name prefixed to it, but from the introduction we find that it was "heard by Mr. Malchair in Harlech Castle". This same Mr. Malchair was a Spanish violinist, who lived in Oxford at the time when Dr. Crotch was Professor of Music in the University. He interested himself in noting down melodies that he heard sung or played, and he materially assisted Dr. Crotch by supplying him with illustrative examples from his stock of MS. music. The Harlech Castle air is exceedingly simple; it is in the minor key, of the well-known A.B,B.A form, and of limited compass, lying entirely between the tonic and dominant; thus it has all the characters of a simple folk-tune. The sequel to this story is no less interesting. A short time ago Llew Tegid, turning over a heap of rubbishy second-hand books on a stall in the Bangor market, came across a neatly-written volume of MS. music. This turned out to be one of Malchair's books, and within it, among a number of airs of various nationalities, was this forgotten Welsh folk-song. Copied in a Welsh castle by a Spanish violinist, and published by an English professor of music, after the lapse of a hundred years it thus returned once more to its native hills.

Crotch's remarks upon the Welsh airs are so appreciative that they have been quoted again and again; it is

chiefly on this account that he demands notice here. So far as his criticisms apply to harp tunes alone, what is said about the modern tonality and measure of Welsh music, and about the excellence of the Welsh marches, is fully justified. It must be borne in mind, however, that the music upon which the remarks are based form a mere fraction of Welsh national melody, and that in other departments, particularly that of folk music, modal music and irregular rhythm prevailed extensively even at a much later period. Besides, although Dr. Crotch was a brilliant player and composer, he was not a critical student of musical history; he accepted without further investigation the material at his disposal, and he was not well acquainted even with old English melodies. This explains the fact that of the thirty-six airs here given a few are included which are not Welsh.

The year 1809 is notable in the annals of Welsh music, not because of any additions to our published airs, but on account of the two first serious attempts made to fit the harp melodies with words. The two men that took this work in hand were John Parry *(Bardd Alaw)* and George Thomson of Edinburgh. The efforts of the latter were sufficiently ambitious and generous to deserve success, but from an artistic, and particularly from a national, point of view it was a decided failure, and the causes of this are so instructive at the present juncture that they are deserving of close consideration.

Thomson had already studied the Scotch and Irish melodies when he was led "to think of the Welsh airs also. Delighted with the beauty and peculiar character of these, and finding that they had never been given to the public in a vocal shape, the Editor formed the resolution to collect and adapt them for the voice; to procure masterly accompaniments and characteristic English

verses, and to render them in all respects as interesting as possible." The airs were sent to Thomson by "friends in different parts of Wales". He also "traversed Wales himself, in order to hear the airs played by the best Harpers". He acknowledges obligations to Sir Foster Cunliffe of Acton, Sir Robert Williams of Fryers, Owen Williams, Esq., of Llanidan, Paul Panton, Esq., of Plasgwyn, Owen Jones, Esq., Merchant in London, Mr. Richard Llwyd, and Mr. John Clark, for assistance. The total absence of English poems to the melodies surprised Thomson greatly. His astonishment was still further increased when he was told by Richard Llwyd, the Bard of Snowdon, that there were hardly any lyrics even in Welsh. Llwyd adds: "There are in the Cambro-British many penillion, or short epigrammatic stanzas, which have in some degree intruded into the lyric province. Of these compositions, which in festive circles are frequently extemporized, Jones has given a variety." In a footnote Thomson adds a very instructive passage: "The Editor was not so fortunate as to meet with any of the Welsh Improvizatori, nor with Harpers who sang along with the instrument." Thus we see that here again we are confined entirely to instrumental music, and it is clear that the folk-song of the peasantry found no encouragement in the halls of the gentry, where the enthusiastic Scotsman was entertained.

Now, what were the causes of the failure of this ambitious and well-conceived enterprise? In the first place, Thomson altered many of the melodies to suit his own taste, and that his taste did not equal his enthusiasm is evinced by the bitter complaints of Irish and Scotch writers of the gross injustice done to their melodies. In the next place, the poems were not successful. Some of them, notably some of those supplied by

Mrs. Grant, were good, but the majority betrayed a complete want of sympathy with the spirit of the music, and with Welsh national sentiment. In many cases the poets employed wrong metres and utterly failed to catch the rhythm of the music, torturing the lines to fit wrong metres by shortening here, or adding there, or making a plentiful use of inappropriate and weakening slurs. One of the worst instances of this is "Hob y Deri Dando". What with Thomson's interference with the melody, and Mrs. Hunter's badly fitting words the melody is a mere travesty of the original.

The following table shows how the musical settings were distributed.

Vol. I (1809).	Haydn	...	20
	Kozeluch	...	10
Vol. II (1811).	Haydn	...	17
	Kozeluch	...	15
	H. and K.	...	1
Vol. III (1817).	Haydn	...	4
	Beethoven	...	26
			—
			93
			—

In the musical settings, as in the words, there is the same inability to express the national sentiment. This was felt quite as strongly in the case of the Irish and Scotch settings. This is what one of the writers on Scottish music in *Grove's Dictionary* says (Ed. I, vol. iii, p. 449): "The musical arrangements were by German musicians of the highest standing, whose scientific knowledge, however, scarcely made up for their want of acquaintance with the style of music."

It would be exceedingly difficult to find a better object lesson in national music than this presents to us. Here

we have an enthusiastic Scotchman who mutilates many of the Welsh airs which he desires to glorify; we have a number of English and Scotch poets, most of whom fail to fit the airs with words that express either the rhythm or sentiment of them; and the foremost musicians of Europe write excellent arrangements, which yet lack the subtle something that breathes out the national feeling. All this shows us clearly that it is essential that both the poet who writes the words, and the musician who sets the accompaniments, should be completely imbued with the national feeling, in order that the melody may retain its power of appeal to the hearts of the people that gave it birth.

John Parry the second, subsequently known as Bardd Alaw, had already published several collections of Welsh airs, arranged for instruments, particularly in 1804 and 1807. In the year 1809 there appeared the first volume of his *Welsh Melodies*; of these airs twenty-three were furnished with words.

Born at Denbigh in 1776, Parry became successively bandmaster of the Denbighshire militia, teacher of the flageolet in London, director of music for the Vauxhall Gardens, and musical critic for the *Morning Post*, besides filling a great many other minor posts. He must have been an attractive personality, being genial and generous, and withal modest to a degree. These qualities made him exceedingly popular among Englishmen as well as among his fellow countrymen. His industry was remarkable. He published "upwards of seven hundred vocal pieces, and as many instrumental ones, and about twenty books of instruction for different instruments, and a collection of two thousand melodies of various nations, forming altogether about forty thick folio volumes" (T. Price, introduction to *Welsh Harper*, vol. ii). As a musician he had a practical acquaintance with the capacities of

most of the instruments of the orchestra; he wrote with great facility and fluency; his melodies were excellent in form, and full of grace and elegance; while his accompaniments were smooth, flowing, and appropriate. It is true that Parry lacked the power to produce anything great or strikingly original (he seems to have been fully conscious of his own limitations): it is equally certain that his refined taste never allowed him to publish anything that was crude or unmusical.

Not only did he possess a more delicate sense of the beauty of melody and of accompaniment than Edward Jones, but his feeling for metre and poetical rhythm was far more acute. Parry could himself write very smooth verse, and, whether he writes his own lyrics, or edits those of other writers, we find abundant evidence of his sound instinct for the appropriate union of word and note—of musical and rhetorical accent. In this respect (though not always in the quality of the poetry) Parry's works would bear study by the majority of modern Welsh writers of lyrics. To give only one instance: he expressly states, in one of his introductions, that the Welsh melodies (meaning the harp airs) require a syllable for each note. Now it is notorious that some melodies of this type have been utterly spoilt for vocal purposes by the excessive use of slurs: the *Cambrian Minstrelsie* in particular will furnish many examples. Even Ceiriog occasionally went wrong on this point, witness his "Hela'r Ysgyfarnog", where he has followed the example of Mrs. Hunter (in Thomson's book) rather than the far more vigorous metre adopted by Parry.

Bardd Alaw's professional work lay among the English, and in his publications he catered for the English market, yet he never lost his love of Wales and of her song. He was an active member of the various London Societies of

Welshmen, and he took the liveliest interest in Welsh Eisteddfodau. If to all the above be added the fact that he lived at a time when national minstrelsy was in high repute, we at once perceive that Parry was remarkably well endowed, and most favourably situated for improving the status of the Welsh national music which he loved so well. He undoubtedly did a great deal for it, and yet alas! there were limitations of knowledge and of vision which prevented the accomplishment of much that might have been in his power: much excellent material that lay convenient to hand was not properly utilized, and golden opportunities for enriching our store of melodies were missed.

The second and third volumes of the *Welsh Melodies* appeared in 1823 and 1829, and the first was re-issued with a smaller number of airs, and with words by Mrs. Hemans. Welsh airs were also employed in several of the ballad operas written by Parry, and others are found scattered through various collections. When we examine these melodies, to try and discover the extent of the service thus rendered to Welsh vocal music, there are several things that strike us forcibly. First and foremost is the fact that the words supplied were entirely English; nothing was done as yet towards popularizing the vocal, or *song*, use of these harp airs among the Welsh-speaking peasantry, as was subsequently done so effectively by Ceiriog and Talhaiarn.

Next let us consider the airs themselves. For the present we must leave out of consideration the *Welsh Harper*, for the second volume did not appear till 1848, and Parry cannot be credited with the novelties that appeared in it. We find that Parry made no addition to our stock of published national melodies, he merely took the tunes that formed the *repertoire* of the harpists—

the poor, neglected folk-song remained unrecognised by him.

A careful analysis of the contents of his many publications further reveals the fact that he had a certain set of tunes which were utilized over and over again. If, for instance, we take the *Welsh Melodies* of 1809, the *Six Divertimentos* (instrumental) of 1825, the *Trip to Wales*, a ballad opera published in 1826, and *The Welsh Girl*, another ballad opera dated 1833, we find that "Nos Galan" and "Hunting the Hare" appear in the four publications, while the following are made use of in three of the works:—"Ar hyd y Nos", "Y Gadlys", "Gorhoffedd Gwyr Harlech", "Codiad yr Haul", "Llwyn Onn", and "Cadpen Morgan". In the case of many of the airs the credit of popularizing them belongs entirely to Parry; in others he merely followed the example of certain English musicians who had already recognized the beauty of some of the airs and made them widely known in England. There still remain in the old collections a number of excellent airs which await a new Ceiriog to vivify them with appropriate lyrics.

Parry wrote a great deal about musical matters to the *Cambro-Briton* and other publications; he was also fond of inserting in his works gossipy little paragraphs about the melodies. His style was always vivacious and bright, and, so long as he confined himself to contemporaneous matters, such as the mode of playing particular airs by the harpists, the *tempi* adopted, the methods of dancing and of penillion singing, the notes are very interesting and useful. As soon, however, as he tries to play the part of the musical antiquary he betrays his ignorance. Although he possessed an imperfect copy of the 1742 collection (of which he has given us a full account), he did not know that Blind Parry was the compiler; nor did he seem to

be aware that the harpist of Ruabon had ever published such a volume. He regarded it as paradoxical that a tune called "Triban" should be in common time, not knowing that the term applies to a metre, and that there are a great many tunes which have borrowed the name. "Tri th'rawiad" also puzzled him greatly—he thought the term must refer to a masonic rite!

Parry's ideas of the form and structure of Welsh melodies were limited entirely to the harp tunes, and his writings show that the characteristics by which he recognized them were such as would exclude a large number of our folk-songs. Of this type of melody he could write examples to order, witness his "Cader Idris" ("Jenny Jones"), "Sion ap Ifan", and the many songs presented by him to the London Welsh societies. Parry's Eisteddfodic friends solemnly decreed that these should be enrolled among the national melodies; they did not realize that in doing this they usurped the function of the national musical taste. Some of the melodies, like "Cader Idris" (which has the form and harmonic plan of "Llwyn Onn"), justified the decree, but others, such as "Merched Mon", though included in several collections, never succeeded in winning recognition as national melodies.

In spite of these shortcomings, Parry had a very real love for the music of his native land, and he did a great deal to make the melodies better known in England as well as in Wales. His smooth and melodious arrangements, and the English words he procured for them were in themselves sufficient to increase the popularity of the airs. Besides this, the better educated Welshmen of that time held Parry in such high esteem as a musician that any music bearing his name was admitted without question into public favour; while among the English, the frequent performance of these Welsh melodies in the theatre and the

Vauxhall Gardens gave them an excellent advertisement. The result of this can be seen in the large number of arrangements of them published by English musicians, some for vocal use, others for instrumental purposes, particularly as exercises for the pianoforte and other instruments.

During this period John F. M. Dovaston, of West Felton, near Shrewsbury, published his *British Harmonies* "with symphonies, harmonies and accompaniments by Mr. Clifton, and appropriate songs by Mr. J. F. M. Dovaston, M.A." The writer has not seen a copy of this work, but from certain letters, dated 1824, in the Jenkins Kerry MSS., we know that Dovaston took a great deal of interest in the Welsh melodies, and that he had assisted Dr. Crotch in procuring specimens for his lectures. The following passage in one of the letters is instructive: "In my almost annual excursions about my beloved Wales I always carry a small book of staved paper for the purpose of taking down from the harpers' playing any tune, either that is good, or savours of the olden time." Once more we have an example of the reliance placed upon the harpist as the sole exponent of a nation's song.

The only other collection of melodies of this period was *The Cambrian Harmony* by Richard Roberts, the blind harpist of Carnarvon, in 1829. Incidentally we may mention that the *Cambrian Harmony*, credited in the British Museum Catalogue to Bardd Alaw, and dated 1809, was really a very poor reprint of Blind Parry's *British Harmony*. Roberts's collection is not of great value. Though it was claimed that the airs "had never before been published", only about fifteen or fewer were new. The melodies were all for the harp, and had no words. Roberts is said to have been an excellent harpist, but he was evidently no scholar, for the spelling is very faulty and the English translations are often shockingly bad.

This period is appropriately brought to a close by the publication of the first volume of the *Welsh Harper*, by Bardd Alaw, in 1839. This was practically a reprint of the greater portions of the three volumes of Edward Jones, with a small number of previously unpublished airs and a few original melodies at the end. The preceding year was marked by a very notable event—the collection of Folk-songs proper by Miss Maria Jane Williams, of Aberpergwm, and by Ieuan Ddu; these collections were, however, not published till 1844 and 1845 respectively.

We have now shown conclusively that from the year 1742 to 1838, or more correctly 1844, Welsh national song was represented, in its published collections, by harp melodies, together with a comparatively small number of ballad tunes; and that folk melodies were almost completely ignored. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the bulk of this harp music was really and truly national music. Foreign students of national music might find it difficult to realize this, but we have plenty of evidence for it. We know that up to 1825 there was hardly a neighbourhood without its harpist, and the greater number of these airs were well known to all the instrumentalists. Even now there are many of the old harp MS. books in existence, and, with slight variations, the same list of airs appears in most of them. We also know that penillion singing, according to the "legitimate style", prevailed throughout the length and breadth of North Wales. Bardd Alaw testifies to his having often witnessed from "30 to 40 persons sitting round the harper, and each in his (or her) turn sing a pennill".

In his two books on the *Origin and History of Gwynedd-igion* (1830), and on *Penillion Singing* (1825), W. D. Leathart gives us some curious illustrations of this custom. Under the date 1789 we read; "At 3 o'clock in the morning,

however, after singing all night, the Eosyddion agreed to deposit their medals with the umpires", etc. "In 1790 some gentlemen of St. Asaph gave a medal for the singers 'gyda'r delyn'. This was awarded to John Jones, a blacksmith of St. Asaph, after a *contest* of *thirteen hours*." In the earlier book a list is given of the houses in London where penillion singing went on, each evening of the week, and yet we are told that at this time, owing to the influence of the Methodist Revival, these old customs were greatly on the wane. Even so late as 1830 a list is given of twenty-five penillion singers *living in London*.

In view of the combination of adverse circumstances that obtained at this period it is surprising that the melodies managed to survive at all, and their perpetuation (in spite of the strong current of prejudice) is in itself a strong evidence that they possessed truly national characteristics. The discrediting of the music through the influence of the Methodist Revival was not the only evil that befel it. The harp, and the music played upon it, were driven more and more into the public-house; fewer men of respectable character or of intelligence followed the calling of harpist, and, as a natural result, the playing itself greatly deteriorated. Dovaston refers to the harpists' poor playing in indignant terms; Parry tells us that most of them played by ear, and that the triple harps especially were frequently not completely strung.

The kind of air that suffered most from the Reformation was the dance tune. Travellers in Wales tell us that the dance music of that period was exceedingly lively. The religious movement extinguished dancing. Of the tunes a very small number underwent conversion into vocal music and so were saved; the majority have become so unfamiliar to us that when we meet with them in the

old collections we instinctively suspect them of being strangers and interlopers.

We now leave the period of a hundred years between 1742 and 1844, a period which (so far as its published music is concerned) may be termed the *Period of Harp Melodies*, and come to a time when some amount of attention was paid to the more humble folk melody. The harp tune is still pre-eminent, and the attention paid to its "poor relation" is often grudging and unintelligent, yet over and over again has the latter proved its claim to recognition: the airs may often be simple and unsophisticated in form and structure, they are frequently more vocal, and in expressiveness the best of them have not been surpassed by any of the harp tunes.

Miss Williams of Aberpergwm's collection, already referred to, and published in 1844, is quite unique in the annals of Welsh song. It is the first collection of genuine Welsh Folk-songs ever published. It is the precursor of other published collections, but in its thoroughness and accuracy it stands alone. It is a noteworthy fact that for nearly the whole of this class of work we are indebted to the Eisteddfod. This stands to the credit of the institution, but it is certainly not to the credit of those collectors who never would have interested themselves in the work without the inspiration of an Eisteddfodic prize. Aneurin Owen Pughe had already won a prize for such a collection at the Brecon Eisteddfod; these melodies, however, were not published till 1848, when they (or at least some of them) were incorporated in the second volume of the *Welsh Harper*. Lady Llanover offered a prize for unpublished Welsh airs at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod of 1838. The best collection was that of Maria Jane Williams, but the second best, compiled by John Thomas *(Ieuan Ddu)*, was also very good,

and appeared in 1845, incorporated in *Y Caniedydd Cymreig*. In the Llangollen Eisteddfod of 1858 a prize was again offered for a collection of unpublished Welsh airs. The best, that of Llewelyn Alaw, formed the nucleus of *Alawon fy Ngwlad*, by Nicholas Bennett. The second best, the authorship of which we have not as yet been able to ascertain, is now the property of Mrs. Mary Davies. Some of the melodies in this collection will be included in the forthcoming *Journal of the Welsh Folk-Song Society* (part i).

Returning to the Aberpergwm collection, *The Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg*, as it is called, comprises forty-two airs. Among them are such well-known favourites as "Y Bore Glas", "Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn", "Clychau Aberdyfi", "Y Deryn Pur", "Y Fwyalchen", and "Merch y Melinydd". For the singer and for the student alike, this is a model of what a folk-song collection ought to be.

In the first place the folk-words sung to the tunes are in all cases recorded. Where, as in the instances quoted above, the words are good and well mated to the melodies, the advantage to the singer and to the melody itself of having the lyrics recorded is self-evident. In other cases, where the words are inappropriate or otherwise objectionable (though not, as occasionally happens, unprintable), it is still an advantage to place them upon record—they can be replaced by better ones at any time.

Miss Williams is also careful to supply particulars as to the place of origin of each melody. Had this been done by other collectors, what a lot of trouble would have been saved to the student!

All the airs bear clear evidences of painstaking care in noting them down. It is to this fact that we are indebted for the eight Dorian melodies contained in the

collection. On the authority of the harp melodies in the earlier collection, the impression had grown that Welsh national airs were always modern in their tonality, so that it is positively startling to come upon a collection, made within a limited area, where nearly one-fifth of the tunes are modal.

One would have thought that the success achieved by Miss Williams would have encouraged many others to labour in this field, and that the work done by her would have served as a model for successive workers. Wonderful to relate, very few attempts were made to rescue the remainder of our folk-songs from oblivion, and every collection published fell far short of the excellence of this one.

Ieuan Ddu's *Caniedydd Cymreig* contained twenty-five unpublished folk-songs, together with many previously published tunes, and a number of original melodies. Unfortunately the words associated with the tunes are replaced by new ones, both Welsh and English, written by the compiler, and these are very unequal in merit. Some of the lyrics are good, others have occasional verses that are singable, but a large number are too clumsy, both in thought and diction, to become popular. Several of these tunes also are modal, some being very mixed in their tonality.

It is very unfortunate that so many of our musicians should have misunderstood the modal tunes. Some have expressly and positively stated that all such tunes must of necessity be "wrong", and that the "mistakes" of ignorant people, as they have been called, should on no account be perpetuated. There certainly are occasional cases of this description, but every musician who has paid any attention at all to the history of musical scales knows that true modal tunes furnish examples of scales which

represent an older stratum of melody than the major mode, or the modern minor; of this stratum, outcrops appear in the folk-music of every western nation. Furthermore, a comparative study of folk-music shows us that some of the melodies depend entirely for their expressiveness on their modal characteristics; when Dorian tunes are changed into minor, or Æolian into modern minor, they immediately lose some element of expression that they previously possessed. In genuine examples of this class we have the untaught musical feeling finding, as by instinct, its own language, simple and quaint it may be, but natural and effective, and free from the sense of effort and adherence to rule that so often causes much of the "correct" music of the musician to seem commonplace or ineffective. The net result of the lack of appreciation of modal music on the part of the Welsh musicians of the past has been that all the modal tunes in the collections under discussion have been persistently ignored; and that of others, subsequently collected, many have suffered the process of "correction", that is, of conversion into the more easily harmonized minor form.

In the year 1848 the second volume of *The Welsh Harper* made its appearance. This contains a large number of previously unpublished melodies, many of them being of great interest. The airs were taken from three MS. collections, which had been given to John Parry many years before this. One of the three, the Brecon prize collection of Aneurin Owen Pughe, has already been referred to. The other two were "A Book of Wels Tuns", noted down for the patriotic Owain Myfyr by "some erudite Cambrian minstrel during a tour made by him for that purpose at the expense of Mr. Jones", and a very extensive collection made by the Rev. John Jenkins of Kerry. There is nothing in the volume to indicate which

MS. any particular tunes were taken from, or, indeed, whether all the airs were made use of. Fortunately, however, the originals of the third MS. have lately been recovered, and by comparing these with the *Welsh Harper* we can decide whether Parry made good use of the material at his disposal or not. The writer wishes to express his obligations to the custodians of the MSS. for allowing him to inspect them. As soon as the contents have been examined and catalogued they will be made public. The tunes are neatly copied, and systematically arranged in "Adrannau", according to their nature, the books being labelled *Molus Seiniau Cymru.* The majority consist of carol and ballad tunes, consequently many are of English origin. There are, however, many true folk-songs among them.

What makes this MS. especially valuable is the fact that most of the tunes have words referred to them. All who have tried to fit old ballads and carols to the published versions of the tunes named above them know what a hopeless task it is in many cases. (On this point see *Eos Llechid* in *Y Cerddor*, vol. i, p. 39.) Here we have the fitting of words to music done for us. We are referred to *Eos Ceiriog*, or the *Blodeugerdd*, or some other published collection, or to a MS. The name of the author is given, and the first verse quoted in full, while in the case of unpublished folk-words all the verses are generally copied. The locality in which the melody was sung, or the name of the person who supplied it, is usually added. We know that the MS. in Parry's possession contained these particulars, for among the papers there is a list of tunes "sent to Mr. Parry in 1826", and in addition to the name of the tune, in each case the opening bars of the melody are written, together with a reference to the words to be sung. The whole of this mass of useful information

has been entirely omitted by Parry! And yet he manages to find room for things we could well have done without. Among the quaintest and most characteristic things in this, as well as in the Brecon collection, are the Ploughing and Milking Songs. Parry evidently could not appreciate the rustic simplicity of them. One of the former, entitled "Cwyn yr Aradrwr", in the Kerry MS., has the following words:—

"Fe gwyd yr haul er machlud heno,
Fe gwyd y lloer yn ddisglaer eto;
Cwyd blodau hâf o'r ddaear dirion,
Ond byth, O byth ni chwyd fy nghalon," etc.

The tune is printed without the words, but an original part-song, "founded on *Cwyn yr Aradrwr*", is added. This is "sweetly, smoothly modern", and regular in its cadences, and has the following words written to it by Parry himself:—

"Stay, gentle Fay, and hear my ditty,
I love a maid who loves not me,
O, gentle Fay, on me have pity,
Cause her to love or set me free."

Neither words nor music call before our vision the Glamorgan field or its ploughboy. Into another melody of this class Parry has introduced a most concert-hall echo effect. "Eos y Bele", in vol. i of the *Welsh Harper*, affords an example of the difficulty caused by the omission of the words. The middle part of the song as it stands seems most puzzling in its form; when, however, we examine the MS. copy we find that two short interludes for the harp have been included as if they were integral parts of the melody. In several other cases where there is a difficulty in understanding the form of a tune, a reference to the words causes the apparent difficulty to vanish, and very often it becomes an added charm. There will, undoubtedly, be many who will agree that it would

have been of far greater profit to Welsh music had these MSS. been published exactly as they were—we could have more easily spared Bardd Alaw's harmonies than the interesting information suppressed by him; the former could have been supplied by other musicians, the latter once lost would only have been recovered with difficulty.

The exigencies of space will not permit a detailed discussion of the remaining collections, nor indeed do they demand more than a passing notice, excepting only the valuable collection of Nicholas Bennett, for they contain little that is new.

Davidson's 250 airs, published in 1859, have neither words nor harmonies, and there are no particulars of origin of any of the tunes. There are many new melodies, but of these many are not Welsh; thus the collection is very unreliable.

From 1860 until the appearance of Bennett's Collection in 1896 the most important work done consisted in popularizing the vocal use of the Welsh melodies. This was accomplished chiefly through the excellent Welsh lyrics written by Ceiriog, who was foremost in this field, though Talhaiarn was also very successful in many of his songs. The two collections that contained the largest number of these new lyrics were Owain Alaw's *Gems of Welsh Melody* and Brinley Richards' *Songs of Wales*. Many other Welsh poets tried to emulate the example of Ceiriog, but though there have been many partial successes, no one has as yet been able to don Ceiriog's mantle. There is still a vast amount of work to be done before all our Welsh airs are furnished with worthy lyrics.

A few previously unpublished melodies were recorded in the works of Pencerdd Gwalia, Owain Alaw, and Dr. Parry, while others were published separately from time to time.

The *Cerddor* and its successor, *Y Cerddor Cymreig*, deserve

special recognition for the tunes and the excellent articles that appeared on their pages.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett, in a spirit of unselfish patriotism, spent an immense amount of time and trouble and money in collecting together unpublished Welsh melodies. Seven hundred were handed over to Mr. Emlyn Evans, who carefully winnowed out foreign elements and tunes that had already appeared. He also harmonized the airs and added an excellent account of some of the more celebrated harpists and penillion singers. This work represents a strenuous and honest attempt to collect unpublished Welsh melodies, and as, in spite of wholesale rejections by the Editor, about five hundred tunes have been recorded, it is clear that the Welsh nation owes a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Bennett for collecting the airs, and to Mr. Evans for so ably editing them. At the same time we cannot but regret the fact that Mr. Bennett should have taken the *Welsh Harper* for his model rather than the more excellent Aberpergwm collection. It is true that the inclusion of the words (where such were obtainable) would have increased the expense of publication; particulars of origin could, however, have been given without adding much to the cost of printing. After Bennett's death, his papers and books were dispersed, but several of the MSS. used by him in the compilation of the melodies have passed through the writer's hands, and the comparison of them with the published work is often full of interest. There is some evidence to show that Bennett, in collecting, like most of the earlier collectors, was partial to instrumentalists. Not only have harpists' MS. books been utilized, but Militia Band books as well have been ransacked. Some of the marches in particular seem to have been composed expressly for local bands, so that their claims to be included among the national melodies

are not very strong. In one of the MS. books, a very neatly-written collection of harp tunes, there is a note in Bennett's handwriting that such-and-such pages (which are missing) had been sent to the Editor. In the same book, in a handwriting different from that of the rest of the book, there is a real folk melody in the Dorian mode, and in all probability Welsh. This was seemingly not regarded as good enough for inclusion to send to the Editor. In another MS. there is a case which reminds one of Parry's treatment of "Eos-y-Bele". The air "Mwynen Mai" in *Alawon fy Ngwlad* seems to terminate on the dominant. The MS. out of which Bennett copied the tune has the words written underneath the music, and these finish on the tonic, four beats before the end, the additional notes having the direction "ar y delyn" above them.

So great is our indebtedness to this collection that attention is called to some of its evident shortcomings not in any spirit of mere fault-finding, but in the hope that musicians who assisted Mr. Bennett, or who possess some of his papers, or who have access to any other sources of information respecting any of the melodies, and particularly of folk-words associated with any of the tunes, should either publish such information themselves or communicate it to the writer, or to the Welsh Folk-song Society for publication.

One question remains to be considered—Are there any Welsh melodies still uncollected? Some pessimistic musicians maintain that there are none, or, alternatively, if there are any, that they are not worth noting down. The work already done by the recently-established "Canorion", and "Welsh Folk-song" societies is a sufficient answer to this question. From a very limited area in North Wales a very large number of tunes have already

been obtained, and among them are several that will enrich our national minstrelsy. As might have been expected, many of those offered were mere variants of airs already published, others were English, and some were poor in quality. Even after making the necessary deductions for all these circumstances we find that the Society has already more material in hand than it can publish for a long time. The examples selected for publication in the Society's Journal are not confined to such melodies as may be good enough to sing on the concert platform—others are included which serve to elucidate the nature and development of the folk-song, or which throw some light on the characteristics of Welsh music or on purely local peculiarities.

The following is a summary of some of the more important conclusions come to above.

1. The majority of our national melodies were originally harp tunes, and were only fitted with words at a late period. Many of those included are either not adapted for vocal use or are of foreign origin.

2. Up to 1844 all the published collections were made by North-Walians or by foreigners; the beautiful South Wales song was altogether neglected.

3. Of the carol- and ballad-tunes a large number were English, but several that bear English names are in reality Welsh.

4. The publication of Folk-melodies was neglected until 1844, and the excellent example set by Miss Williams, particularly in respect to the recording of folk-words, has never been adequately followed since.

Folk-melodies differ essentially from the typical harp-tunes. Among them occur modal tunes, particularly Dorian.

5. Welsh national music has suffered irreparable loss through not being properly recorded. Welsh musicians were the last in the British Islands to start the publication of their melodies; they have subsequently been slow in perceiving where the riches of their country lay, and in making proper use of them.

For the student, and for the lover of Welsh minstrelsy, the following are some of the aims and objects which should be kept in view in all future work in this field.

1. The critical study of the different types of Welsh melodies, with the view of elucidating the special characteristics of our national music.

2. The formation of a chronological list of all the published Welsh airs, together with a complete bibliography and an alphabetical index.

3. The collection of all unpublished melodies, and of particulars relating to these and to tunes already published.

4. The securing of a poet, or school of Welsh poets, capable of performing for the remainder of the Welsh melodies what Ceiriog did for so many of them, and what Moore and Burns did for Irish and for Scotch melodies.

5. Above all, the present movement—as yet feeble and half-hearted—for obtaining the proper recognition of our native minstrelsy in the life of the nation, in the Schools, the Colleges, the Eisteddfodau, etc., should be widened, strengthened, accelerated.

Were this done we have no doubt that Welsh national music would become a potent factor in fostering our nationality: it is not impossible that in time, as musical culture advanced, a distinctive school of Welsh music would spring into existence, which would thoroughly justify for Wales the old title of "Gwlad y Gân".

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